**Tarzan**

Tarzan of the Apes was the first of twenty ­four Tarzan novels that Edgar Rice Burroughs wrote over the course of three decades. Most of this introductory novel describes Tarzan’s upbringing in a tribe of African apes and his self­ education in written English, but it ends by telling a little of his entry into the world of civilized humankind.

The novel begins with a storyteller’s disclaimer about having gotten the story from an unspecified man who had Colonial Office records to verify the tale. Burroughs then turns to third ­person narration, first through the point of view of Tarzan’s father, then largely through that of Tarzan himself.

John Clayton, Lord Greystoke, boards a ship for British West Africa with Alice, his bride. He saves a burly sailor from the brutal captain. When the crew mutinies, the grateful sailor makes sure that the Englishman and his wife are not killed, but he abandons them in a wilderness harbor with all of their luggage and a few supplies.

The site has a river mouth for water, and John and Alice gather and hunt to live well after their supplies run out. Although not a tradesman, John builds and furnishes a log cabin with a clever door latch for protection against wild beasts. Their son is born there. A year later, Alice dies, and Clayton is killed by an ape, Kerchak.

Among the attacking apes is Kala, a female whose own baby has died. Finding the now ­orphaned, hairless white baby, she takes it up as her own. After ten years, the relatively puny and slow Tarzan—“white ape” in their tongue—begins to mature in both body and brain.

Although he knows nothing of his connection with the cabin, it fascinates him. When he discovers how to open the cabin latch, he finds many books, including a brightly illustrated alphabet. The “bugs” on the pages fascinate him, and in time he teaches himself to read them.

He also finds a sharp hunting knife and, when a huge gorilla attacks him, he accidentally discovers the knife’s usefulness. With it, he gains status as the tribe’s greatest hunter and fighter, eventually becoming their leader.

Later, a tribe of black Africans settle in the area, and Tarzan's adopted mother, Kala, is killed by one of its hunters. Avenging himself on the killer, Tarzan begins an antagonistic relationship with the tribe, raiding its village for weapons and practicing cruel pranks on them. They, in turn, regard him as an evil spirit and attempt to placate him.

At about the age of 20 a new party is marooned on the coast, including [Jane Porter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jane_Porter_(Tarzan)), the first white woman Tarzan has ever seen. Tarzan's cousin, William Cecil Clayton, unwitting usurper of the ape man's ancestral English estate, is also among the party. Tarzan spies on the newcomers, aids them in secret, and saves Jane from the perils of the jungle.

Among the party was French Naval Officer Paul D'Arnot. While rescuing D'Arnot from the natives, a rescue ship recovers the castaways. D'Arnot teaches Tarzan to speak French and offers to take Tarzan to the land of white men where he might connect with Jane again. On their journey, D'Arnot teaches him how to behave among white men. In the ensuing months, Tarzan eventually learns to speak English as well.

Ultimately, Tarzan travels to find Jane in [Wisconsin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wisconsin), USA. Tarzan learns the bitter news that she has become engaged to William Clayton. Meanwhile, clues from his parents' cabin have enabled D'Arnot to prove Tarzan's true identity as John Clayton the Earl of Greystoke. Instead of reclaiming his inheritance from William, Tarzan chooses rather to conceal and renounce his heritage for the sake of Jane's happiness.[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tarzan_of_the_Apes#cite_note-1)